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the records and history of the counties in Virginia in which the Clays lived, knows that during the colonial period they did not rank with the gentry or ruling class. Neither in Henrico nor in Chesterfield was a Clay a magistrate (one of the best tests of a family's position), and nowhere in the records of these counties, so far as I am acquainted with them, is a member of the Clay family styled "gentleman." The fact is, that the Clay family was an example—probably the best example—of the prosperous yeoman farmers (using the word in an English sense to make the meaning clearer) who have always composed the great majority of the rural population of Virginia. It is strange that in the past many writers (especially those hostile to Virginia) have been apparently ignorant of the very existence of this great part of our people, and have appeared to think that Virginia was inhabited solely by the "planting aristocracy" and the "poor whites." There was never any impassable line between this middle class and the aristocracy (using the word solely to mean the large-property-holding and the office-holding class) and movement from one to the other, in both directions, was constantly going on.

Such mistaken views, due to a very pardonable family pride, which shows itself in almost every published genealogy, have deprived this book of an instructive lesson to the student who is interested in genealogy on account of the light it throws on the history of a people. It would have been of value to show that there was this great middle class in colonial Virginia, that this class was composed of such people as the Clays were, and that under changed and more liberal conditions such families could produce such men as the family of Clay has done.

But Mr. Smith and Mrs. Clay did not write with a view to furnishing side-lights on the history of the Virginia people, but to prepare a memoir of the mother of Henry Clay, and a genealogy of the Clay family, and these purposes they have, with the exceptions noted, carried out admirably. The book is published in the usual sumptuous fashion of the Filson Club, and contains twenty portraits.

COMMUNICATION.

TO THE EDITOR OF THE AMERICAN HISTORICAL REVIEW:

My dear Sir:

There are members of the American Historical Association and readers of the AMERICAN HISTORICAL REVIEW who, having subscribed to the *Letters to Washington*, have a right to be informed how far Mr. Worthington Chauncey Ford is justified in his criticisms on that work or to what extent his review is based on his own individual theories (see his review in Volume IV., No. 4, July 1899, page 729). In justice, therefore, to such subscribers; to students and historical writers who will use the *Letters* in connection with their own work, I hope I may be given an

opportunity, on the eve of the appearance of Volume II. of the series, of replying to a part of Mr. Ford's censorious review,—a part only, for it were useless to discuss the dogmatical statements made by Mr. Ford regarding both the mechanical and the editorial side of the work. His statement, for example, "that capitals and abbreviations are interesting from the study of character they permit, but inserted words may be embodied in the text, and altered words unless they materially altered the original meaning may be omitted," hardly agrees with his first statement that "the text must be accurate *and as the writer made it.*"

Why should "Thorton" be either of two other things, according to Mr. Ford, when it is "Thorton" in the original manuscript; or when Colonel Stephen continually wrote "Walkins" (pp. 121, 129, 136) should it be printed, as Mr. Ford would have it, "Watkins"; and where it is clearly "Triplep" in the original should it be changed *in the text* to "Triplett"? The correct spelling of proper names "carelessly" (?) written in the manuscript may be arranged in the index, but in the body of the work the print should follow the original. Why could not Monacatootha have been an "agreed" friend to the English? *Agreed* is perfectly intelligible and it is so in the original, notwithstanding Mr. Ford's suggestion that it is more likely to have been "a good or great friend." "Conigockicg" would be a remarkable printing of Conecocheague were it not that Commissary Walker so wrote it. As to "Talmuth" for "Falmouth" I fail to find it where Mr. Ford says it occurs (p. 136). A reviewer so very critical should be more careful.

As to Mr. Ford's "probable" readings may I not ask why, when Mr. John Carlyle wrote "Car? on the N. first cost", should it have been changed by me even in the exercise of a "personal quality" to "cu? on their"? If this edition of the *Letters* was intended as an historical primer I might have noted that the sentence written in full would be "carrying on the nett first cost." Also in regard to "Grass Guard" (page 142) which Mr. Ford does not understand and for that reason, apparently, drags it in to swell the total of his criticisms. I might have noted that the detachment of men guarding pasturage was so styled, but this I think would occur to anyone reading those letters wherein the subjects of cattle and of pasturage are dwelt upon, or to any one at all familiar with the commissary methods of the period.

I regret, with Mr. Ford, that "conjecture fails to disclose the reference to the Ciprian Dame (p. 39) and to XVIII. f. f. D. (p. 329)." In the first case the Chevalier Peyrouny indicates by a cross-mark where he would have inserted in the body of his letter certain words *written in the margin*. I so inserted them, having read them as printed. On referring again to the original manuscript I see no reason to change my reading. In the other case XVIII. f. f. D. is printed as written. No note could have made it plainer that it refers to the Drafts, the first subject of Col. Stephen's letter.

If a comparison were made of these literal prints word for word with the original manuscripts it would be found that both the printer and the

editor have performed their task conscientiously and that they have proven that it is not the impossible task it appears to Mr. Ford to reproduce in type the peculiar and often characteristic oddities of writing encountered. It seems, however, beyond even the most painstaking care to be never without a slip in such exacting work; but it is a source of satisfaction that even with Mr. Ford's minute scrutiny so few and such obvious misprints have been found, especially when the difficult character and almost illegible condition of many of the manuscripts are considered.

Mr. Ford has, however, pointed out some typographical slips in the printed text. "I have seen a breviate comission" (p. 12), should read "I have sent"; "P. A." (p. 138) should read "P. H.",—Peter Hog, naturally; "esputed" (p. 160) should read "expected"; and again "prenium" (p. 358) should read "premium." The sense is in each case obvious, and while this is no excuse for such misprints, yet they are surely not of such character "that serious doubt must apply to the entire text as printed," as Mr. Ford asserts.

Where Mr. Ford's criticisms are just and tend to eradicate errors, they are appreciated. But where, whenever he does not understand the text, he takes it to be an error or an evidence of *careless* reading of the manuscript or of the proof, and appears to depend upon his memory as to the manner in which the original was written, he goes beyond the limits of fair criticism and unjustly censures that which he does not understand.

I remain, my dear Sir,
Very truly yours,

STANISLAUS MURRAY HAMILTON.

[Upon submitting a copy of the above communication to Mr. Ford, the managing editor has received the following reply:

"I cannot but think that Mr. Hamilton reads into my review a spirit which was not intended. A manuscript should be printed as the writer made it; but this does not mean that every flourish, blot or interlined word should be reproduced. Further, in cases of doubt, it is better to print a proper name in a form which approaches a correct one, than to go out of one's way to produce a form remote from the true and therefore misleading. If the manuscripts are in as bad condition as Mr. Hamilton says they are, he could have erred on the right side, and not read a *c* for an *e*, *n* for *u*, *k* for *h*, *a* for *u* and *n*, or *vice versa*. The function of an editor is to make a manuscript intelligible to the reader, and the reviewer's experience might have saved him from the charge of dogmatizing. Even Mr. Hamilton's explanation leaves it an open question whether his *Conigockicg*, *Wal*kins and *Triplep* are true readings of the manuscript, as the places and names are well known. Does Mr. Hamilton leave an *i* undotted? If not, why make an uncrossed *t* into an *l*?"